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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 53rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MAYCOCK (Barbados)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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(a) UNITED NATIONS IRAQ-KUWAIT OBSERVATION MISSION

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. The CHAIRMAN recalled that the Fifth Committee, at its 49th meeting, had decided to postpone consideration of agenda item 132. In addition, the following items and subitems had been reopened and allocated to the Committee: Programme budget for the biennium 1990-1991 (item 118); Other personnel questions (item 126 (c)); Appointment of an alternative member of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee (item 17 (h)); and Financing of the activities arising from Security Council resolution 687 (1991) (item 156).

2. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee agreed to proceed with introductory statements on agenda items 132 and 156.

3. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 132: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS TRANSITION ASSISTANCE GROUP (A/45/997 and Corr.1; A/45/1003)

4. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report on the financing of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) (A/45/1003), said that Member States had been assessed a total of $409.6 million in respect of UNTAG. Contributions in the amount of $386.4 million had been received, resulting in an outstanding amount of $23.1 million. Voluntary contributions in cash had totalled $13 million, with in-kind contributions amounting to $14.7 million, of which $10.6 million related to items for which budgetary provision had been made.

5. Regarding the Secretary-General's proposal that the shortfall for funding the repatriation of some 45,000 Namibians by UNHCR should be charged to the UNTAG Special Account, the Advisory Committee recommended that consideration of the question should be deferred to the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly. It also recommended that the unencumbered balance shown in annex VI of the Secretary-General's report (A/45/997) should be credited in relevant amounts to Member States in accordance with the Financial Regulations of the United Nations. In that connection, it recommended that the Board of Auditors should be requested to expedite the audit of the UNTAG account so that it might be approved at the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

6. Mr. FOX (United States of America) expressed his delegation's appreciation for the outstanding success of UNTAG and said that the review of the Secretary-General's report (A/45/997) provided an opportunity to take advantage of experience in Namibia to improve the administration of peace-keeping operations and management of resources. The budget allocation authorized by the General Assembly had proved more than adequate, resulting in a surplus of $68 million. The budgets of future peace-keeping operations

(Mr. Fox, United States)

should be approached with greater realism, and voluntary contributions should be reflected in the estimates in order to reduce initial assessments on Member States.

7. The surpluses for the most part reflected shortcomings in the planning stage, and his delegation would appreciate detailed explanations from the Secretariat on some of the items. The amount reimbursed to Governments for military personnel costs had been $10.6 million less than initially planned. The reduction appeared to relate to the delay in deployment and to indicate unrealistic timetables for troop emplacement. The amount budgeted for salaries for locally recruited staff had been significantly higher than actual expenditure, and his delegation would like to know the reasons for the reduction in staffing requirements. Site preparation and construction had also been overbudgeted, and he wondered whether voluntary contributions in kind were responsible for the savings. Air traffic control services and equipment had been provided free of charge by South Africa, which underscored the need for more efforts to negotiate host government agreements.

8. On the other hand, in a number of instances, actual requirements had been significantly higher than expected, as in the case of contingent-owned equipment. It would be useful to know Secretariat policy regarding adjustments for exchange rate fluctuations in reimbursement for such equipment. His delegation would welcome more complete explanations regarding the significant variations in expenditure for office furniture and equipment, contractual services, freight and external audit. An explanation of the type of expenditures financed from the "provision for contingencies" would also be welcome.

9. The Secretary-General's disposition of UNTAG property was of particular concern to his Government. Document A/45/997, annex V, paragraph 15 indicated that more than half of UNTAG property, valued at $25.9 million, had been donated to the Namibian Government. His delegation believed that the decision to transfer such a large proportion of UNTAG property was not in the best interests of Member States, given the substantial needs of other United Nations programmes. The right hand drive vehicles used in Namibia could have been used in Western Sahara, for instance. In future, his delegation would insist on full intergovernmental reviews of plans by the Secretary-General to dispose of property paid for by assessed contributions. His Government was opposed to the Secretary-General's request to transfer surplus funds to UNHCR to cover an apparent shortfall in repatriation funding. The operational costs of refugee programmes should not be financed through assessed contributions, and there should not be a regular budget subsidy for that purpose.

10. Mr. CHABALA (Zambia), referring to paragraph 6 of A/45/1003 regarding the Secretary-General's proposal to fund UNHCR repatriation of Namibians from the UNTAG Special Account, said that there had been a clear understanding that the Secretary-General would not hesitate to recommend alternate means of funding for any shortfall. That understanding had been reached in the context of the

(Mr. Chabala, Zambia)

Security Council negotiations taking place at the time. With regard to the ACABQ proposal that consideration of that matter should be deferred until the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly, his delegation would like to be reassured that such action did not deprive the Secretary-General of an opportunity to make necessary recommendations for alternate funding means, not excluding the possibility of funding from the UNTAG Special Account.

AGENDA ITEM 156: FINANCING OF THE ACTIVITIES ARISING FROM SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 687 (1991) (A/45/240 and Add.1; A/45/1005)

(a) UNITED NATIONS IRAQ-KUWAIT OBSERVATION MISSION

11. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Committee's report on financing of the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) (A/45/1005), said that the Secretary-General had estimated its requirements for the six-month period from 9 April to 8 October 1991 at $75.1 million. In view of of the short notice for preparation of the Secretary-General's report and lead time for the operational plan, a number of uncertainties remained with regard to the estimates, and actual expenditure could be lower.

12. The full strength of UNIKOM would be in place by 1 May 1991. However, full cost estimates for military observers and international staff were based on a full 183-day initial period, and a lapse factor was not reflected. The Advisory Committee had requested the Secretary-General to pursue every effort with the host countries to obtain premises for the operation of the mission and accommodation of staff without cost to UNIKOM, since the budget provided for accommodation facilities for staff and support troops. Appropriate administrative action should be taken, where accommodation was provided to personnel receiving subsistence allowances, to make the required reductions, resulting in substantial savings. The Advisory Committee was of the view that the cost estimate for hiring helicopters was high when compared with commercial rates and costs for other peace-keeping operations. In future, efforts should be made to obtain less expensive commodities and/or facilities on a more competitive basis. The Advisory Committee also recommended that the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Chief Military Officer, should review whether requirements would exceed the four helicopters provided so far.

13. With regard to vehicles and transportation equipment, ACABQ cautioned against the acquisition of equipment more sophisticated and expensive than necessary to fulfil the requirements of the mission. The total appropriation for UNIKOM for the period 9 April to 8 October 1991 should not exceed $60 million net. With regard to proposed cost estimates for the subsequent six-month period, they should be submitted to the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly after Security Council action.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.